

IDEAS AT *Work*

COMPUTERS/HILLEL SEGAL

'Compucard' simplifies address record-keeping

Secretaries will delight in "Compucard," a new program from Rolodex that automates the preparation of Rolodex card files using an IBM PC or PC-compatible computer.

The program allows a data base to be set up on your computer's disk that contains all name and address records, as well as other information normally kept on Rolodex cards. Then, anytime you please, old records can be updated or new records added, and you have the choice of printing out just the changes, just the additions, or the entire data base.

The \$49.95 program is offered by the Rolodex Corp. and sold through local computer stores. It uses continuous Rolodex cards that are available in office supply stores for about \$16 per thousand.

Here's why I like Compucard, and why I'm happy to recommend it:

✓ In cases where many people access the same Rolodex file, the program allows duplicate files to be prepared with almost no extra effort.

✓ If your Rolodex file is messy and hard to read, like mine, the program neatens it up in a hurry.

✓ Corrections and additions are a piece of cake. It's easier than writing out new cards by hand or typewriting. In the case of corrections, it's easy to locate any particular record in the data base and change just the item that needs to be changed.

✓ Salesmen's codes, product codes or your own classifications can be added to a special field on each card. This allows for retrieval of certain classes of records at will. Although I'm not sure how frequently this function would be used, it's nice to know that it's available.

✓ The program is much quicker and easier to set up than regular data base programs, even though it

does many of the same things.

On the negative side, the program requires you to input all your current handwritten or typewritten cards into the computer in order to get started. This actually sounds a lot worse than it is. If your business has several hundred current

Rolodex cards, a typist might need to allocate just several hours for the entire input process.

Also on the negative side, it doesn't have many of the snazzy features that many people have come to expect with data base programs. So if you're an experienced user, it might seem rather ele-

mentary. On the other hand, data base programs typically need to be customized by an expert to do some of the simple functions of Compucard.

While I'm being picky, here are a few other drawbacks you should be aware of. When you first set up the program, you're asked to specify how many records you expect in your data base, and this cannot be changed. Also, even though it's possible to set up various codes to retrieve specific cards later, the procedure is complicated and documented poorly in the manual. It's easy to get confused when doing this function and not issue the commands properly. Obviously, when this happens, the results are not as expected.

Just one other thing — the perforated Rolodex cards take time to get used to. Aside from these minor items, however, the program works as expected.

The bottom line: if your company's current Rolodex is a messy hodgepodge of out-of-date and hard-to-find cards, and your secretary uses an IBM PC or PC-compatible computer regularly for other tasks anyway, this program could be just what you are looking for. It's not too hard to set up and relatively easy to use.



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